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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000544

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TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC PHUM ZI
SUBJECT: ZANU-PF MINISTER BRIEFS ON WASHINGTON VISIT

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Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Minister of Tourism Walter Mzembi (ZANU-PF) briefed polecon chief on his recent visit to Washington as part of a delegation headed by Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai. Mzembi took away the clear message that reforms and compliance with the Global Political Agreement (GPA) were necessary for developmental assistance. Shortly after his return, he briefed President Robert Mugabe. Mugabe asked Mzembi, who is viewed as a reformer and has been the subject of attacks by ZANU-PF hard-liners, to address the ZANU-PF Politburo and make his case for reform. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) We met with Mzembi on July 1. He returned from a 21-day trip to the U.S. and Europe with Tsvangirai, Minister of Economic Development Elton Mangoma (MDC-T) and Minister of Regional and International Cooperation Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mashonga (MDC-M) a few days earlier.

¶3. (C) Mzembi told us that in virtually every meeting during the trip, whether in the U.S. or Europe, the subject of Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Governor Gideon Gono was raised. In general, western interlocutors made clear dissatisfaction with the slow pace of completing the provisions of Q{VQbexpanded assistance.

¶4. (C) Mzembi was particularly enthusiastic about the Washington phase of the trip and a range of meetings that included Secretary Clinton (whom he described as extremely gracious and interested in Zimbabwe), NGOs such as NDI and IRI, and Senator John Kerry. He proudly showed us photos. He lamented he had been excluded from the meeting with President Obama. Obama was an "idol" and he had read both of his books. Further, in Mzembi's talks with reporters, the focus of discussion was his absence from the White House meeting rather than the substance of the trip.

¶5. (C) Mzembi said he briefed Mugabe on the trip soon after his return. Mugabe's first question was why Mzembi had not been permitted into the meeting with Obama. Mzembi said he

told Mugabe he doubted Obama was aware of the decision -- it had probably been made by a staffer for political reasons.

¶16. (C) According to Mzembi, in his post-trip meeting he was extremely candid with Mugabe. He relayed western concerns about ZANU-PF obstruction of compliance with the GPA, including Gono's continuing role, and urged Mugabe to carry out its terms. He told Mugabe that Tsvangirai had spoken positively about Mugabe's current role in government and his partnership with Mugabe and that he (Mzembi) therefore thought it inappropriate that Mugabe and ZANU-PF had been publicly criticizing Tsvangirai and the trip. He also told Mugabe that ZANU-PF was becoming ossified and that the survival of the party depended on newer and younger leadership.

¶17. (C) Mugabe responded by saying that a number of ZANU-PF elders were resisting change; they did not realize or accept that ZANU-PF had not won the election and that compromise was therefore necessary. He asked Mzembi to address the next meeting of the ZANU-PF Politburo and make his case for reform.

¶18. (C) We asked Mzembi why, if Mugabe appeared to accept the case for reform, he didn't take necessary steps, including compliance with the GPA. Mzembi replied that: 1) he didn't know if Mugabe had the power to enforce his will on these issues; and 2) despite his seeming openness to Mzembi, Mugabe was influenced by those with whom he had frequent contact such as Emmerson Mnangagwa and the service chiefs.

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COMMENT

¶19. (C) Mugabe's position is ambiguous. He bucked ZANU-PF hard-liners by entering into the GPA, but he is resistant to taking necessary steps to make the GPA work. This is probably due both to pressure from hard-liners and his own desire to perpetuate himself as the holder of the balance of power. Mugabe is the key to additional reform; whether or not he acts is dependent on reformers such as Mzembi (and now Vice President Joice Mujuru) convincing him that it is in his interest. END COMMENT.

MCGEE